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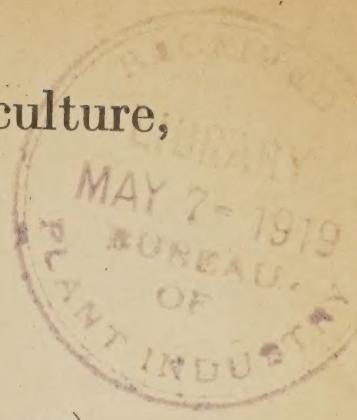
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United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Forage-Crop Investigations,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

CARPET GRASS (*Axonopus compressus*).

Carpet grass is also known as Louisiana grass, and by the Creoles of Louisiana as *petit gazon*. It is a perennial creeping grass forming a dense, close turf, the compressed 2-edged creeping stems rooting at each joint. In the United States the grass has never become troublesome as a weed. It is now widespread in the Tropics of both hemispheres, but is native to the West Indies. In the United States it is doubtless introduced, but is abundantly established on the Coastal Plain soils from southern Virginia to Texas, extending inland to Arkansas and north-central Alabama. It is especially adapted to sandy or sandy loam soils, particularly where the moisture is near to the surface most of the year. On such soils it will occupy the land in practically pure growth, especially under heavy continuous grazing. The flower stems grow to a height of 1 or rarely 2 feet and are very slender (fig. 1). Even where the grass is grazed heavily, good crops of seed are produced, as live stock graze principally on the basal leaves.

On much of the area in which it grows, carpet grass is more valuable than any other perennial grass yet known for permanent pastures. It continues growing throughout most of the year, being damaged only during periods of severe drought or of heavy frosts. With sharp frosts the leaves turn yellow, but nevertheless cattle will continue to graze on the browned grass. It is probable that the carrying capacity of carpet grass under favorable conditions is as great as that of bluegrass, namely, about one head to 2 acres. In order to maintain pastures in good condition heavy grazing is necessary, and alternate grazing of two fields is preferable to continuous grazing of a single field. On the soils most favorable to carpet grass it makes up a very large proportion of the total grazing afforded. It is rare to find carpet grass and Bermuda grass growing on the same area of soil. Lespedeza, or Japan clover, however, succeeds very well when mixed with carpet grass. Bur clover and Augusta (or narrow-leaf) vetch are also valuable in carpet-grass pastures and once established reseed themselves each year.

For its best development carpet grass requires both abundant heat and moisture, and under such conditions may be pastured from May to November, or in the extreme South even longer. During the cool

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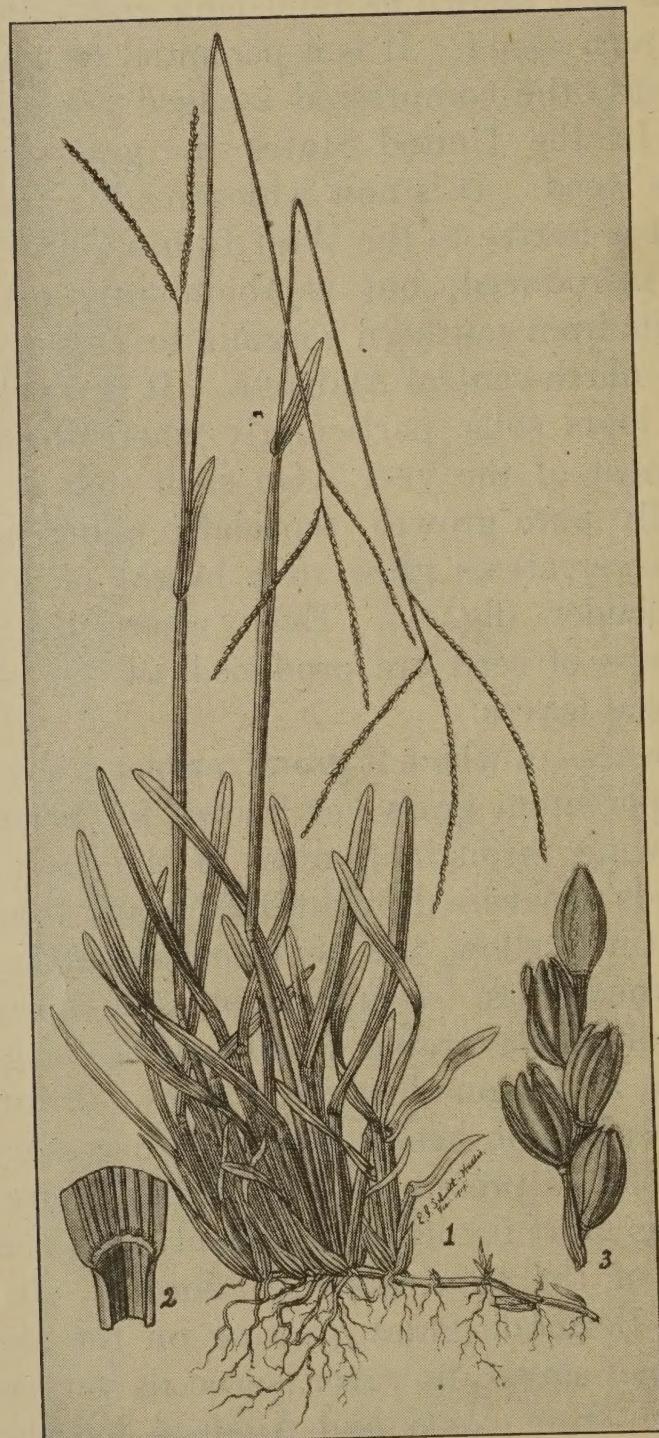


FIG. 1.—Carpet grass: 1, Entire plant; 2, ligule; 3, section of the rachis with five spikelets.

weather of winter it makes little growth. If, however, a field of carpet grass be allowed to grow tall in the fall, cattle will graze eagerly on the dead tops in winter.

Carpet grass can scarcely be considered a cultivated grass as yet, and commercial seed until now has seldom been obtainable. This grass now occurs in nearly all of the area to which it is adapted, so that it is rarely necessary to plant it especially. About every village in the extreme South where the town cattle graze, carpet grass makes up the bulk of the pasturage. Where sowing is necessary, however, it is a simple matter to mow the grass after the seed has matured and scatter the straw with the attached seed over the field where it is desired to establish the grass. If the conditions are favorable to carpet grass it is sure to occupy the land, provided the grazing is heavy enough to keep down the weeds and taller grasses. Where these are permitted to grow the carpet grass is killed out by shading and other causes.

Carpet grass for lawns may also be propagated by sets or pieces of sod. To obtain a good sod of carpet grass the land should be well prepared to a depth of 6 to 8 inches and be well fertilized with 20 or more tons per acre of well-rotted stable manure. This manure should be free from weed seeds. In case it is not convenient to secure an ample supply, a smaller quantity of stable manure may be supplemented with 500 to 1,000 pounds per acre of high-grade fertilizer. It is impossible to make good lawns without the ample application of fertilizers. The manure should be applied broadcast after the land is broken and harrowed well into the soil. The plants should be set about 12 inches apart each way. In planting small lawns it is usually best to put out the sets with a trowel or some other hand tool. For large lawns it is more economical to plow the land again and drop the sets or pieces of sod the proper distance apart in the furrows. The land should be rolled after setting carpet grass in order to press the loose soil close around the plants.

No experimental data are available as to the feeding value of carpet grass as compared with other pasture grasses, but experience shows clearly that it is highly palatable and apparently very nutritious, as cattle succeed well where they have practically nothing but carpet-grass pasturage.

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